DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 252 511 SP 025 700

AUTHOR Bowman, Kennard L.
TITLE Pennsylvania's Long-Range Planning for School Improvement.
PUB DATE Jan 83
NOTE 6p.; In: Anderson, Shirley, Ed. School Effectiveness: Climate, Goals, and Leadership. Summary and Proceedings of a 1982 Regional Exchange Workshop. p55-59. For the complete proceedings, see SP 025 695.
PUB TYPE Speeches/Conference Papers (150) -- Reports - Descriptive (141)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Agency Cooperation; Educational Testing; Elementary Secondary Education; *Improvement Programs; *Long Range Planning; Needs Assessment; Resource Allocation; *State Programs; *State School District Relationship; Technical Assistance
IDENTIFIERS *Long Range Planning for School Improvement PA; *Pennsylvania

ABSTRACT

A long-range school improvement program, under the direction of the Pennsylvania State Department of Education, was developed to coordinate and articulate the curriculum, as well as to structure school management and other district operations. Featured in the plan are: (1) a statewide testing program called "Educational Quality Assessment"; (2) provision of technical assistance to local school districts; and (3) the involvement of institutions of higher education. Five areas are accommodated in the improvement plan: (1) programs and services; (2) management; (3) staff development; (4) community involvement; and (5) non-district resources. (JD)

**********
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
**********

ED252511

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)
☑ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.
☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.
• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official NIE position or policy.



# PENNSYLVANIA'S LONG-RANGE PLANNING FOR SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT

Excerpts by Dr. Kennard L. Bowman

*There are different approaches and processes, but I think all of us are moving in the same direction; we have the same general goals.*

There are many ways to move toward school improvement. As we look at the topic of school improvement problems, issues, and answers, I would like to brag about the things which we are doing well. I think it is important also that I acknowledge that there are certain places where we see the need for more progress. I have heard about several different strands of school improvement in the three days of the conference, and I think that they have many similarities.

In Pennsylvania, we have a written long-range planning requirement. This mandate is required of the 501 school districts once every five years. Essentially, what we are requiring of these 501 school districts once every five years is something called Long-Range Plan for School Improvement. Of course, we have an acronym, LRPSI.

We require our districts to follow a basic education planning model. If we were to do an analysis of all the different sections of this basic educational planning model, there would essentially be the same format, whether there are four steps, five steps, ten steps, or whatever number of steps—I don't think we can deviate too much from the model. Districts do a needs assessment, develop action plans, implement and evaluate those plans. How they do that is essentially local discretion provided they follow general guidelines which we have developed.

We found that many school districts said to us, "Why are you asking us to do these things? We are already doing them." We respond, "That is fine. We are not asking you to change what you are doing, since there is much local discretion on how to proceed with the plan. We would hope that you would continue doing the things in which you believe. Use this as an opportunity to reexamine and make necessary modifications."

In some districts we find the other extreme. We may get a lot of resistence. In many instances, those are the districts which have a disjointed curriculum. In response to allegations, we go into a district and ask to see the written curriculum; we find a lot of discomfort when there is no written curriculum. Nothing seems to tie the K-12 curriculum together, and every teacher

SP 035 700

essentially does his or her own thing. The Long-Range Plan for School Improvement has the potential to coordinate and articulate the curriculum, as well as to structure school management and other district operations.

*We are involved in an ambitious program which is both necessary, desirable, and overdue.*

In November of 1979, our Secretary of Education announced the school improvement plan to the Education Congress, a once a year occurrence which we have in Pennsylvania when all district superintendents come to Harrisburg for the State of Education update. Initially, 77 districts were identified to participate. We had a lot of resistance that first year. When we got to the second year and it was time for new districts, which was an additional 123, we went to Wave I District staff to serve as resources for the Wave II districts in addition to intermediate unit, higher education, and state department people. Much of that resistance during the first year had dissipated and early doubters had become some of our strongest advocates. We scheduled orientation meetings in each of our intermediate units. In Pennsylvania intermediate units are the primary regional service agency. We went to local superintendents, teachers, community members, and other administrators to ask if they would be on a panel to share their school improvement experiences.

We have made some progress in school improvement in Pennsylvania, but we have not been without our problems. It is interesting to come to West Virginia, and to learn that West Virginia has a judge who is going to solve school improvement for you. I will be watching your progress.

We are facing the same problems in Pennsylvania which you face in West Virginia. There is less money and we have had cutbacks at the state department. All those things hurt, but we feel we are going to make it.

The Long-Range Plan for School Improvement concept in Pennsylvania has helped us when we have been confronted with parents who have been disgruntled. A parent may come in and ask what we are doing, why we are doing it, and why we are not doing something else. The superintendent can answer that he/she did a needs assessment and on the basis of data made decisions about what priorities should be.

In addition, we have a statewide testing program called Educational Quality Assessment. In Pennsylvania it ties into Long-Range Planning for School Improvement. Too frequently, and rightfully so, we are accused in state departments of government of having too many

mandates which represent duplications and therefore extra work for districts. We feel we are overcoming some of those problems with our long-range planning for schools, combined with statewide testing to show what we are doing and why we are doing it.

*Coming to one of these conferences, and hearing that other people are facing the same problems says to me that now is not the time to sit back and say, "It is not worth it," but now is the time to say, "This is the chance for a new beginning." It won't be the same as it was before.*

We have a commitment to provide technical assistance to local school districts. The Secretary of Education announced in 1979 that in a few years more than half of the professional staff in the Department of Education would be Field Representatives. Field reps are assigned to work with local school districts as one of their responsibilities. We now have 150 Field Representatives and meet with them once a month for staff development activities. When we talk in terms of 150 Field Representatives, I think that is one of the areas which we need to reexamine. It is very costly, particularly when one person must travel to a local school district, and it requires six or seven hours to travel to some districts.

The Field Representative is not expected to be the person who has all the answers when he/she goes to the local school district. That person is expected to be able to provide technical assistance or find somebody who can provide it. Field representatives represent one level of technical assistance. We have involved staff from each of our 29 intermediate unit people in the school improvement program. They are involved as school improvement resource people in the technical assistance network. This is working extremely well in some intermediate units. Later, you are going to hear more about technical assistance at the IU level.

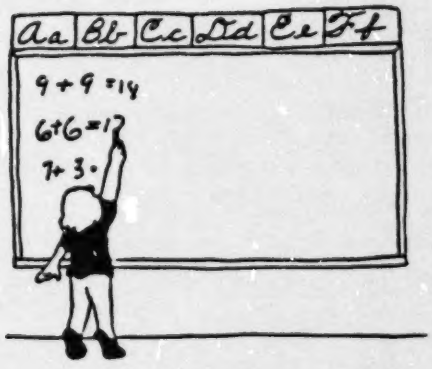
*We said this was going to be a partnership; we will need to involve all the different levels—together so we can do a better job than we can do separately.*

We have also involved the institutions of higher education. The institutions of higher education receive small amounts of money--$1,000 to $3,000 grants. One of the anxieties that many districts had in the first year was that they did not want college people coming into the district and telling them what to do. I recognize that there are many skilled people in colleges and that there are many resources that are available in colleges; however, before a college or university receives any money (and it is not a lot of money), the local school district had to request of the college the service that they had in mind. This would not be imposing college or university personnel upon the local school districts. This approach has worked well in many instances, and college people see it as an opportunity to work in the district in a positive way.

We met with the President of Shippensburg State College recently. He called the meeting and invited college people, state department people, intermediate unit people, and school district people. One of the outcomes of that meeting is a much better chance that local school district people will be going into the college classroom as resource people and vice versa. That type of exchange program always seems to make sense to me.

*When there is a strong, competent person at the college or university, he/she welcomes the opportunity to work with local district people. We see this as an opportunity for the future.*

We are reducing state mandates, which I believe is the right thing to do. As an example, to have the LRP plan approved, the Field Representative signs that a district had completed all sections of the written requirements. If that is done, the Long-Range Plan for School Improvement is accepted, and the district becomes "preregistered." In the past, when a written plan was submitted, it was distributed to eight or ten people in the Department of Education. Each person read the plan, made qualitative judgements about it, and sent a letter back to the local school district. Typically, the letter stated that we would like you to do this differently and we need more information. You can imagine that that did not please local school district people. Because of the mandate, they had to go along with it.




I think we have made some progress in the area of ownership of the plan. When the local district assumes ownership of the plan, the district educational program is likely to be enhanced and the state is relieved of many monitoring and regulatory functions.

In conclusion, we have five areas in the Pennsylvania School Improvement Plan. They include:

- programs and services,
- management,
- staff development,
- community involvement, and
- non-district resources.

Some of those sections are more important than others. In our effort to move rapidly, we have not been able to interrelate all five areas. We have found that the programs and services area and the management area need to be done concurrently. Failure to follow essential management practices will jeopardize program success. In addition, we consider school climate and the school effectiveness research to be integral components of school improvement.

Many things which I have heard at this conference reiterate that, "Yes, school improvement is important in the 1980s." We are interested in and committed to implementation and evaluation. Our school improvement plan is moving in that direction.

To contact the presenter, write:

Dr. Kennard L. Bowman
Coordinator, School Improvement
Administrator Division
Department of Education
333 Market Street
Harrisburg, Pennsylvania 17108